

A Point in Time
By Jacob Gray

Alex looked at his watch as he jogged. He was keen to beat his time from the previous day. He wasn't fast enough. He wiped the sweat from his forehead and quickened his pace.

It was an early December morning and it was still very dark. Alex was on his return jog from Troon and he was now close to the Prestwick Airport. There was no one about and there was very little traffic on the roads.

He was planning out his speech for later that day. There would be no bonus for his staff this Christmas. How would he word that announcement?

Again he looked at his watch. He was better pleased now. He had to get fit for a charity boxing match he'd entered. It would be his third bout in the ring and he wanted to make it his third win. As he neared Prestwick Airport's railway station, Alex was aware of cars driving excessively fast behind him. There had been no traffic passing him for a while. Then two cars appeared, racing each other.

A Mercedes with darkened windows was ahead of a silver BMW. Both cars were being driven recklessly fast towards the roundabout outside the airport.

Then the BMW drew level with the Mercedes and there was a gunshot! Alex stopped jogging and stared in disbelief. What the hell was going on?

The two cars collided and crashed into the roundabout. The silver BMW kept flipping over and stopped further down the road. It was a remarkably loud crash, Alex couldn't imagine anyone surviving it. The black Mercedes landed on its side; its front was crushed and its wheels were still spinning.

Alex had instinctively leapt onto the grass verge and he slowly stood up, staring at the carnage before him. Had there really been a gunshot?

He fished out his mobile phone from his fluorescent running jacket and stepped towards the roundabout.

The back door of the Mercedes burst open and out climbed a young blonde woman. Alex stared at her. She was beautiful and he thought she looked more puzzled than shocked or injured from the crash. He immediately ran to her aid.

'Oh dear God, that was some bump!' The woman laughed and she stepped away from the car. 'My poor driver!' she said shaking her head.

She was dressed in a glittering cocktail dress and wore a long mink coat. She appeared very rich looking. There were strands of diamond jewellery around her neck and wrists. She paused, then leant back into the car and gathered a few things. Then she casually leaned over to her dead driver and closed his eyes!

'Are you all right?' Alex yelled as he approached the woman. 'I'll get an ambulance, the police, just hang on.'

The woman began to walk away from car and she stared at the silver BMW. She suddenly quickened her pace.

'Hey! What's going on? You need to sit down,' Alex shouted.

'No, no, we need to run and run quickly!' the woman replied in a cool educated voice. She looked at Alex and ran her eyes over him. She smiled. 'Thank you anyway.'

Alex glanced in at the driver of the Mercedes. He was a middle-aged man and he had been shot in the head. Alex leapt back from the car. He then looked over at the BMW.

His jaw dropped as he watched two men clamber out of the wrecked car. They were dressed in dark coloured suits and seemed to have stocking-masks over their heads.

Alex realised the young girl was running away from them! He headed after her. She was beautiful and captivating, and he wanted to help her.

'Hey, are they after you? Let me help you,' Alex shouted.

The young woman seemed more than capable of helping herself. She stopped momentarily to take off her high-heeled shoes. In an instant she had scaled the wire fencing and had got onto the platform of the Airport railway station.

With less dexterity, Alex climbed over the fence and ran towards the woman. A southbound train was approaching the station.

'What's going on?' Alex asked. 'Are you a drug dealer?'

'Here, hold these,' the woman replied and she gave her shoes to Alex. 'They're this season's Jimmy Choo's!'

She suddenly pushed Alex down and from the pocket of her fur jacket she produced a small pistol.

The train drew level and, as the doors opened, the woman fired towards the two masked men. She grabbed Alex by the arm and they fell inside the empty train.

'Stay down!' she yelled at Alex as she sat on the floor. She rummaged in her pocket and pulled out some small, silver bullets.

Alex stared in disbelief at the woman. She glanced at him. 'Silver bullets for vampires, not for drug dealers!' she said casually. 'Anyhow, I'm Anne. Thanks for coming to my aid. I'd get off at Prestwick if I were you. This isn't the kind of stuff to get mixed up in.'

'It's a bit late for that. Vampires in Ayrshire?'

Anne looked at Alex. 'Yeah, vampires and that's the truth. You're wearing Lycra? Well you've got the legs for it. Morning jog was it? Oh this will have raised your hear-rate much better. Anyway, what's your name?'

'Alex.'

'Well, get back down, Alex,' she said. She stood up, holding her gun. One of the masked men entered the empty carriage and Anne shot him dead.

Part 2

'Newton-on-Ayr, that sounds like the right place to dump a body,' Anne said with a laugh. She grabbed the body of the man she'd shot and hauled him off the train and onto the platform, propping him up on a bench.

Then she coolly stepped back on the empty train and rejoined Alex.

'You're cold and shaking.'

Anne took off her fur coat and draped it around Alex. She sat beside him and held his arm.

'This is probably a more eventful morning than you'd planned.'

'Yeah, you could say that,' Alex managed to reply. His mind was racing, he was in shock.

The train was slowly pulling into Ayr Railway station. Anne stared out the window. She grimaced.

'It's most probably going to be an eventful day too.'

On the Southbound Girvan line, shrouded in clouds of smoke, a steam train was sitting, ready to pull several gleaming wooden carriages.

Anne and Alex stepped off their train and were met on the platform by an extraordinary-looking group of people.

'Are they vampires?'

'Yeah, they're vampires,' Anne replied and she walked confidently towards the group of theatrically dressed people.

'Dressed for a funeral?' Anne quipped.

An elegant woman stepped forward. She smiled. 'You'd better hope not. Mr de Winter desires the pleasure of your company aboard his private train.'

Alex shook his head. It was quite clear he'd been caught up in something extremely dangerous. However, standing next to Anne he felt he didn't want to be anywhere else.

Anne and Alex were escorted by the entourage into the luxurious old train. The inside was dimly lit, with roller blinds drawn down over the windows. The interior was like a furnished Victorian room. There was someone seated in the carriage.

'Miss Anne Kane, do come and join me. I'm having breakfast.' The words came from a man seated at a table. He was in darkness and only his hands were illuminated.

The train began to move. Anne stepped over to the seated man and steadied herself as the carriage jolted forward.

'Please sit. Can I offer you anything?' the seated man asked as he turned a small lamp on. He was now lit from the side, a ghastly corpse-like creature dressed in a white suit, his shoulders covered with a silk scarf.

Alex gasped. He just knew he was looking at a vampire.

'Guy de Winter, kind of you to meet me. I was planning to catch up with you at some point.' Anne spoke calmly. She sat down, directly opposite the man and looked straight at him.

'Blood, flesh and coffee, would you care for any?' Guy asked.

Anne shook her head. There was a pause.

'Anne, I must say I feel betrayed. You steal from me my beautiful diamonds that I'd lent you and you auction them?! I propel your career as a fashion model, I buy you dresses and shoes, and this is how you repay me? You steal from me.'

'What can I say? I've got a taste for spending money, mostly other people's. Your diamonds bought me a lot of shoes.'

'If only it were that sweetly simple. If only you were a naïve, thieving dimwit. No, Anne, you are much more!'

Guy lit a cigarette and blew out a cloud of smoke. He gazed at Alex. 'You always accessorise with a man! Well, Anne, let's see what specimen you've brought me.'

Alex gasped and stared at Anne. What was happening?

Guy nodded at the elegant lady who had spoken to them on the platform and had now followed them into the carriage. She walked over to Alex. She put her ice-cold hand on his wrist and pulled him in front of Guy. She stripped off his running jacket and t-shirt.

'Do you now what's in here?' Guy asked and he tapped a covered silver dish on the table. 'Oh look, it's a man's arm!' He laughed as he lifted the lid.

'Oh God!' Alex cried. He was in the middle of a nightmare.

'He's a nice-looking athlete. You do choose well.' Guy patted Anne's hand.

'Taste him!' Guy directed and the elegant women turned and bit into Alex's chest.

Anne stood up, 'No! leave him! Anyone but him! Me, take me!'

The elegant women complained in French, and Guy argued back.

'I need to put you on a blood-purifying diet young man. Then I'll dine on your superb body! Take him away!'

'Alex, I'll save you! Don't be afraid ! I'll kill this old man and rescue you!' Anne shouted after Alex as he was dragged away, struggling and screaming.

Guy lifted a blind and looked out the window. 'Miss Kane, Ayrshire is so damp and dull that a Parisian Vampire like me can sit out quite boldly during the day. In my short stay here, I've become quite attached to the scenery of Ayrshire - and eating the people. I've bought property and put this coastal railway line back. I've even bought an island. Well, a rock. And I have built a beautiful castle on it.'

Anne was nervous. 'Fascinating, Guy. You always could persuade people. You are, I presume, taking me down the coast to see your island?'

Guy took Anne and walked to the window. They looked out at the grizzly grey morning outside. From the window there was a view across the Firth of Clyde to Ailsa Craig and before the Craig they could see the paddle steamer Waverley.

'Upon that rock I've built my new home and I'd be delighted to take you there, Anne. We'll travel on that paddle steamer that I now own.'

'Sightseeing on the Firth of Clyde?' Anne quipped.

'You nearly pulled it off. You got into our company by acting the beautiful fool. I was deceived. You have been a vampire assassin of great skill. But on that rock, in my castle, you will die!'

Part 3

Alex was dragged into another carriage. He yelled out as he saw the carriage was filled with shelves of coffins. An open coffin sat on a table. It was for Alex. With a considerable struggle the vampires forced Alex into the coffin and closed the lid. He screamed in terror.

Guy de Winter had spent a considerable fortune building his private coastal railway in Ayrshire. He stood staring from his carriage as the train pulled into a newly built station near Maidens. He held Anne's arm tightly. He explained to her his difficulty in gaining permission to build his beloved railway.

'No one has any vision. That is the real problem. Obstinate locals - you either buy them or eat them.'

Anne glanced at Guy, 'The persuasive powers of being a vampire.'

'You see, I bought that lovely paddle steamer Waverley to ferry me from Maidens to my new Ailsa Craig island home. I build them an improved harbour and everyone in office makes a fuss. There can't be any official persons left in Scotland without bite-marks on their necks!'

The entourage of vampires stepped out from the train and headed along to the restructured

harbour. It was now daylight and Guy and his fellow vampires carried black umbrellas and wore dark sunglasses, forming an extraordinary and funereal-like procession.

Anne was led along as a prisoner. 'I see none of the locals dare look at you, let alone approach.'

'Yes, I really did have to tame these people.' Guy laughed.

In the enlarged Maidens harbour the paddle steamer Waverley was berthed and Guy smiled when he saw her.

'My divine Waverley! I've spent a fortune on upgrading her. I've furnished her splendidly! Come, Anne, step on board. We travel in luxurious fashion.'

Alex was locked inside the coffin. He breathed deeply and quietened his racing mind. He listened. He couldn't hear anyone in the carriage. He'd have to break free now.

He kicked and thrashed violently, but couldn't budge the lid. Alex wanted to cry but he had to remain calm. He paused for a moment then he had an idea. Alex moved from side to side to make the coffin move off the table. There was a crash as it fell and hit the floor. Alex tumbled out and immediately made his escape from the train carriage.

The Waverley had set sail for Ailsa Craig across the Firth which was far from calm. The paddle steamer rolled from side to side.

Anne had been seated in a palm-filled lounge, that was furnished with gold painted wicker furniture. A gramophone was playing some scratchy sounding music and the blinds were drawn at every window. Guy stood silently in the dimly lit room. He stared at Anne.

'Would you care to dance?' Guy asked.

Anne smiled wryly, 'Why not?' She stood up and took Guy's hand and they proceeded to waltz.

'Anne, you really are the prettiest creature that I haven't drank the blood of,' Guy said with a sigh. He stared deeply into Anne's eyes.

'Well, Guy, why not set me loose?'

'Pretty and beguiling as you are, I've tired of you. Your blood will run free tonight!'

There was a smashing sound and the paddle steamer stopped moving abruptly. The lights began to flicker and there were loud crashing sounds coming from the engine.

Guy hissed with temper and roared instructions for his guards to find out what was going on.

Then a window was smashed and a flare was shot into the lounge. It burned with a dazzling bright glow which made Guy turn his face from it.

Alex marched into the room! Anne gasped with delight and ran to him.

'Hello, Mr de Winter,' Alex said confidently. 'I've come to return Anne her fur coat.' Alex handed the coat to Anne, who put it on.

As the flare died down, Guy turned to face Alex. 'How very dashing of you. Have you really come to save her and stop me? I'm Guy de Winter, and you think YOU can stop me?'

BANG!

'No, but I can,' Anne said and shot Guy with her pistol. 'Silver bullets can stop any vampire, even Guy de Winter.'

Anne turned and kissed Alex, She apologised to him and stared at him. Alex hugged Anne. 'Of course I would save you. But we're sinking! I stole the coastguards' boat and crashed her into

the Waverley's hull.'

They ran on to the deck. Anne fired her gun as the vampires tried to attack. Alex and Anne climbed into a lifeboat.

'Are you ready?' Alex shouted as he deployed the lifeboat and they left the stricken Waverley.

Alex and Anne sat in the lifeboat. They hung onto each other tightly. Anne had draped her fur coat over both of them. They didn't watch as the Waverley sank into the Firth, Alex had put an axe through all the other lifeboats. There would be no vampire survivors.

'Well, Alex, I bet this wasn't how you planned to spend the day?'

Alex hugged Anne. 'At this point in time, I can't think of a better way to spend the day.'

Alex looked at Anne and smiled. He kissed her. They pulled the fur coat tightly around themselves and sat back in the lifeboat.